

# Age Action

## News release

### Age Action calls for a fair budget on 9<sup>th</sup> October that protects older people

**Age Action, Ireland's leading advocacy organisation for older people, has called on the Government to protect the incomes of older people and to invest in home care.**

"Next week the Government must deliver a budget which protects older people, one that recognises the contribution made over decades by more than 600,000 workers, homemakers, carers and entrepreneurs who are now pensioners" said Anna McCabe, Interim CEO, Age Action.

Publishing its top priorities for Budget 2019 the organisation is highlighting the need to increase the state pension to meet the rising costs of living for older people and to tackle inadequate home care provision.

#### Rising Costs of Living

"Pensioners are increasingly worried about being able to pay their essential bills or of being forced into a nursing home because there are no home supports available" said Anna McCabe, Interim CEO, Age Action.

She went on "A growing number of older people worry about making ends meet in the face of rising costs such as healthcare, energy bills and insurance. Many of these increased costs are solely related to age."

Older people are slow to benefit from the improved economic climate and are showing a slower recovery from poverty. Cuts made in recent years to income supports such as the Fuel Allowance, the Bereavement Grant and the Christmas Bonus, combined with new taxes and rising prices, are causing many older people to remain at risk of poverty.

Earlier this year hundreds of Age Action members met across the country and agreed their priorities for this year's budget, which have been costed and published today:

1. Increase the weekly **State Pension** by €5 per week to build towards achieving the Government's commitment in the National Pensions Framework of a State Pension set at 35 per cent of average weekly earnings [Cost: €160.9 million]
2. Increase the cost of the **Living Alone Allowance** by €3 per week [Cost: €32.8 million]
3. Reverse the **changes introduced in 2012 to the State Pension** system reducing the number of bands from six to four [Cost: €73 million]
4. Increase the **Home Supports** budget by 26% to begin to meet unmet need [Cost: €107 million]
5. As a first step towards reinstating the over 70s medical card, expand the range of services provided by the GP visit card to include **prescriptions to those over 70** [Cost: €61.5 million]

6. Remove the **GMS prescription charge** for over 70s medical card holders [Cost: €42 - 44 million]

### **Crisis in Homecare**

Age Action today also highlighted the need for investment in supports to enable older people to remain in their homes for longer.

The numbers of home help hours and people in receipt of the service have dropped since 2008, despite the sharp growth in our ageing population.

“Every year 20,000 more people turn 65, and we will need an additional 7.2 million Home Help Hours a year by 2030. This unmet need is particularly worrying given that 6,458 older people were waiting for new and additional Home Support services as of May of this year” said Anna McCabe.

### **Ireland needs a Statutory Home Care Scheme**

“Home help hours and home care packages are simply not available in many parts of the country, with provision of care varying greatly across the regions. This means many older people simply do not have the option of being cared for at home, more families are struggling to cope without home help, and there is more pressure on carers.”

“We need a functioning home care scheme now.”

Along with its key priorities, Age Action also published detailed submissions it made to a number of individual government departments, which are available online at [www.ageaction.ie/budget2019](http://www.ageaction.ie/budget2019)

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